CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of document management, comprising:

providing a document;

scanning the document with a scanning machine configured to determine if the document has a machine-readable code thereon; the scanning machine being further configured to extract at least some information from the machine-readable code if the machine readable code is present on the document;

providing a database of information that can be present in the machine-readable code on the document; and

comparing at least some of any information extracted from the machine-readable code by the scanning machine with the information in the database to track the document.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the document comprises printing the document with a printing device which prints the machine-readable code on the document; and wherein the printing device is in data communication with the database.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the scanning machine is linked with a copying machine configured for copying the document, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines if the document can be copied, and wherein the copier is configured to copy the document unless the scanning machine finds the machine-readable code on the document and extracts information from the machine-readable code not authorizing the copying.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the scanning machine is linked with a copying machine configured for copying the document, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines if the document can be copied, and wherein the copier is configured to not copy the document unless the scanning machine finds the machine-readable code on the document and extracts information from the

machine-readable code authorizing the copying.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the information included in the machine-readable code includes one or more of a version number of the document, an identification of an author of the document, a filename of the document, and a storage location of a file corresponding to the document.

6. A method of automated document tracking, comprising:

generating a primary image on a document with either a printer or a first copying machine;

printing a machine-readable code on the document as it is generated; the machine-readable code containing information, the printing device being in data communication with a database so that the information printed in machine-readable code on the document is also recorded in the database;

scanning the document with a scanning machine configured to determine if the machine readable code is present on the document and further configured to extract at least some of the information from the machine-readable code; and

comparing the information extracted from the machine-readable code by the scanning machine with the information in the database to track the document.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the scanning machine is linked with a second copying machine configured for copying the document, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines if the document can be copied, and wherein the second copying machine is configured to copy the document unless the scanning machine finds machine-readable code on the document and extracts information from the machine-readable code not authorizing the copying.

8. The method of claim 6 wherein the scanning machine is linked with a second copying machine configured for copying the document, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines if the document can be copied, and wherein the second copying machine is configured to not copy the document unless the scanning machine finds the machine-readable code on the document and extracts

information from machine-readable code authorizing the copying.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein the machine-readable code is configured such that it will not be fully reproduced on any copies formed by copying the original document with the second copying machine.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the machine-readable code is printed with at least one of a resolution or tonal difference that cannot be reproduced by the second copying machine.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the machine-readable code is printed with an ink that is not visible when viewed with only light in the visible wavelength range, said ink becoming visible when stimulated with light outside of the visible wavelength range.

12. The method of claim 8 wherein the machine-readable code is configured such that it is reproduced on copies formed by copying the original document with the second copying machine.

13. The method of claim 8 wherein the second copying machine is configured with a second printing device that prints a new machine-readable code on any copies formed from the document.

14. The method of claim 8 wherein the document is generated with the first copying machine, and wherein the second copying machine and the first copying machine are the same copying machine.

15. The method of claim 8 wherein the second copying machine is configured to identify a user requesting a copy of the document, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines if the document can be copied by particular users, and wherein the second copying machine is configured to not copy the document unless the scanning machine finds the machine-readable code and extracts

information from the machine-readable code authorizing the copying by the user identified by the second copying machine as requesting a copy of the original document.

16. The method of claim 6 wherein the scanning machine is linked with a processor that is in data communication with the database and in data communication with a second printer, wherein the information contained in the machine-readable code defines a version of the document, wherein a digital representation of the scanned version of the document is stored on the database together with digital representations of other versions of the document, and wherein the processor is configured to determine that electronic representations of said other versions of the document are in the database, the processor being configured to enable either the scanned version of the document or at least one of said other versions of the document stored in the database as digital representations to be printed by the second printer.